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12 April 1984**JACK ANDERSON****CIA Maverick
Relives Exploits
Of Vietnam Era**

His CIA code name was "Upin." He used the pseudonym "Pat Gibbs." A huge, congenial Hungarian refugee who joined the U.S. Marines during World War II, he was first bloodied in the battle of Iwo Jima.

But it was his exploits in running a secret "spook troop" for the CIA in the jungle hills of Indochina that made him a legend.

To American diplomats he was an uncontrollable maverick. To his enemies—and some colleagues—he was as fearsome as the Marlon Brando character in "Apocalypse Now," with a similar penchant for collecting the ears and heads of the communist guerrillas he was fighting in the 1960s and 1970s. The Laotian tribesmen he led revered him.

Perhaps because a newsman more than a decade ago blew Upin's CIA cover as a Continental Air Services official, he has a passionate distrust of the press. But Upin agreed to an interview when my associate Dale Van Atta tracked him down in Udorn, Thailand, where he is leading the life of a gentleman farmer.

After some coaxing, he regaled my associate with war stories of his days

among the Hmong tribesmen, and told of the dozen-odd times he was wounded in the anti-communist cause.

When Upin talks, it's not the richly embroidered boasting of many old soldiers. His exploits are confirmed by sources who either applauded or wrung their hands at the time. Missing fingers from a booby trap that also killed a friend are evidence that Upin was no armchair agent.

A 1953 classmate at the CIA's training camp in Virginia recalls:

"He had all the attributes that were desirable in a paramilitary case officer. He knew how to survive, and he was fierce. He could move undetected across hostile territory. He demanded an outdoor life and could never endure the more prosaic existence of an embassy-based intelligence case officer."

Southeast Asia was a natural habitat for Upin. He had recruited Tibetan Khamba tribesmen and ventured into the Himalayas with them. He fought in South Vietnam and Cambodia, and slipped into China on several occasions.

But Upin's heyday was as the leader of thousands of Hmong and Yau hill tribesmen in the CIA's secret war against the Pathet Lao and Vietnamese in Laos. The operation, based at a huge CIA station and airfield, was intended as a diversion to siphon Viet Cong away from the main battle area in South Vietnam.

He learned the tribesmen's language, walked them into the ground on far-ranging forays, and married one of their princesses. Following one firefight, he carried one injured Laotian on his back more than 30 miles—even though he was seriously wounded himself.

About those ears. It seems headquarters in Vientiane questioned some of Upin's "body counts." So he told his men to cut off ears of dead enemy soldiers and put them in a plastic bag he kept on his porch.

When the bags had enough ears in them, Upin sent them to Vientiane. "I used to staple them to the reports," he recalled. Soon there were "bushels of ears" at headquarters. His CIA bosses were not amused.

As for the severed heads, Upin acknowledged possessing and distributing at least two, but declined to say exactly how many. Nor would he address a rumor that he kept pickled heads in jars in his bedroom.

One Viet Cong head was dropped from a plane by Upin as a warning to a Laotian tribal leader whose people had shot up Upin's aircraft. The Laotian got the plane's tail number, and a U.S. ambassador reportedly wound up apologizing for the head-dropping incident.

"If you do everything according to the orders, you'd be in a straitjacket," Upin said without regret. "You have to break the monotony sometimes."